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STATE HISTORICAL RECORDS ADVISORY BOARD

The Montana Archivist

VOLUME 1, NUMBER 1

FALL 1999

What Is A SHRAB? *(State Historical Records Advisory Board)*

The Montana State Historical Records Advisory Board—SHRAB for short—is one of more than fifty similar boards active in all the states, territories, and the District of Columbia. The system of state historical records advisory boards was created in 1975 by the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC), the grant-awarding arm of the National Archives. All states and territories are required to have active historical records boards in order to participate in the NHPRC grant programs.

The Montana SHRAB traces its own beginnings to a September 1976 Executive Order issued by Governor Tom Judge. The Governor of Montana continues to appoint the eight members of the Montana Board to two-year terms. By federal regulation, board members must have experience or interest in the collection, administration, and use of historical records and are dedicated to the preservation and use of Montana's documentary heritage. Since Montana has so few working archivists, members of related fields, representing a variety of constituencies—such as records managers, genealogists, historians, collections curators, and members of local historical societies—have been included on the board over the years. The state archivist is a permanent member and serves as the state coordinator for the board.

Current Board Members

Jodi L. Allison-Bunnell, *U. of Montana*
Tim Bernardis, *Little Big Horn College*
Peggy J. Bourne, *City of Great Falls*
Robert Clark, *Montana Historical Society*
Ellen Crain, *Butte-Silver Bow Public Archives*
Kathryn Otto, *Montana Historical Society*
Kim Allen Scott, *MSU—Bozeman*

What Does a SHRAB Do?

The Montana SHRAB serves two primary roles. First, the board reviews grant proposals of a statewide or local scope submitted to NHPRC for funding support. Second, the board serves as a central advisory body within Montana for historical records planning and coordination.

In addition to the board's review and approval of grant proposals over the years, the Montana SHRAB has engaged in significant activities both on its own and in conjunction with other organizations. Most notable in recent years has been a series of workshops, offered at least once every year at the Montana History Conference, and often offered a second time at the meeting of an allied organization, such as the Museums Association of Montana. Recent workshops have been:

STATE DOCUMENTS COLLECTION
MONTANA STATE LIBRARY
1515 E. 6TH AVE.
HELENA, MONTANA 59620

1994 Starting an Archives
1995 Appraisal/What to Collect
1996 Organizing Archives
1997 Oral History
1998 Cataloging 101
1999 Self-Assessment (coming in October).

(more on page 3)

PLEASE DO NOT

HOW TO BASICS — How to Relax and Flatten Documents

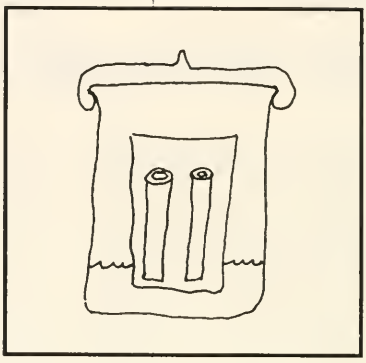
Paper documents that have been kept tightly rolled or folded tend to resist unfolding. Such paper retains a "memory" for its rolled or folded condition and will resist attempts to unroll or unfold them. They are likely to break into pieces or crack along the folds if you forcibly open them. If you have such rolled or folded paper documents that resist even gentle attempts to open them, set them aside to be relaxed by humidification.

Rolled or tightly folded paper is often brittle and the fibers of the paper have lost their natural moisture content. Any attempts to open the documents without replacing that lost moisture may result in damage. Humidification reintroduces moisture and allows the paper fibers to move and flex without breaking.

An humidification chamber can be easily made out of an *airtight, non-corrosive, rust-proof* enclosure. The easiest and most inexpensive approach is to purchase two plastic trash containers, a large one that will hold water and a smaller one that will sit inside the larger container to hold the documents to be humidified.

Humidification reintroduces moisture and allows the paper fibers to move and flex without breaking.

A number of holes can be cut in the top half of the smaller container to speed circulation of the moist air. Approximately two inches of water should be placed in the bottom of the larger container. Sheets of blotting paper may be placed standing upright in the water surrounding the small container to help convey the moisture up throughout the chamber. The larger container must have an airtight lid to keep the moisture inside the chamber. The smaller, inside container should be left open.



Humidity chamber with rolled documents placed inside the smaller container.

The humidity in the chamber will increase the moisture content of the documents and should relax the fibers so the paper can be safely opened. The time required for this to take place will vary depending on the type and weight of the paper, the degree of brittleness, and how tightly the documents are rolled or folded. Don't leave the documents in the humidity chamber for more than twenty-four hours without checking them. Then check them periodically to see whether they have relaxed enough to be safely opened. Twenty-four hours may be enough, or it may take several days for the material to become sufficiently humidified. It's a good idea to mark the date and time when the documents were placed in the chamber on a sheet of paper taped to the lid.

When the documents are sufficiently humidified, they should feel pliable and show little resistance to opening. Once removed from the humidity chamber, the documents must be dried between sheets of acid-free blotter paper and weighted under pressure to flatten them. Each document should be opened carefully on a flat, smooth surface and placed between two pieces of blotter paper. A number of humidified documents may be layered between blotters and then placed under weights. Quarter-inch plate glass or pressboard is ideal for the top layer to evenly spread the weight over the entire surface of the documents.

This article is based on *Archives & Manuscripts: Conservation*, by Mary Lynn Ritzenthaler, published by the Society of American Archivists (SAA). To join SAA or to get a copy of their publications catalog, write to:

Society of American Archivists
527 S. Wells St., 5th Floor
Chicago, IL 60607-3922
<info@archivists.org>.

National Forum on Archival Continuing Education (NFACE)

Survey of Individual Continuing Education & Information Needs

This survey, directed at the people who care for the nation's historical records, is intended to help us develop a better understanding about their continuing education needs and the best ways to address those needs. The results of the survey will be summarized and used to help shape an action agenda at the National Forum on Archival Continuing Education (NFACE) to be held in Decatur, GA, in April 2000. Your contribution in completing the survey is greatly appreciated.

1. Name of organization/institution whose records you care for

_____

_____

City _____ State _____

Department or division you work in (if applicable)

_____

2. This organization/institution is primarily a
   1 historical society
   2 college or university
   3 government agency *(circle one)*
   federal state local
   4 public library
   5 museum
   6 religious organization or institution
   7 other (please describe) _____

_____

3. I am (primarily) *(circle one)*
   1 an archivist or manuscript curator
   2 a librarian
   3 a museum professional
   4 a records manager
   5 other government official or employee
   6 an unpaid volunteer
   7 other (specify) _____

_____

4. For assistance on archival matters, I go to *(circle all that apply)*:
   1 Federal government agency *(specify)*:

_____

   2 State government agency *(specify)*:

_____

   3 Local government agency *(specify)*:

_____

   4 State Historical Records Advisory Board (SHRAB)
   5 Professional organizations *(specify)*:

_____

_____

   6 Colleagues in my profession
   7 Vendors of supplies/equipment
   8 Paid consultants
   9 Other *(specify)*: _____

5. Rate each of the following as topics for training opportunities or information resources (3 = Highest importance; 2 = Important; 1 = Some importance; 0 = no importance) *(circle one for each topic)*

	High	⇨		None
Archival methods, basic	3	2	1	0
Appraisal (evaluating records)	3	2	1	0
Collection development	3	2	1	0
Donor relations	3	2	1	0
Arrangement and description	3	2	1	0
Finding aids	3	2	1	0
Reference	3	2	1	0
Uses of technology in archives	3	2	1	0
Records management, basic	3	2	1	0
Records scheduling & disposition	3	2	1	0
Files management	3	2	1	0
Electronic records management	3	2	1	0
Information policy	3	2	1	0
Preservation/conservation	3	2	1	0
Microfilming	3	2	1	0
Digital imaging	3	2	1	0
Standards for permanent media	3	2	1	0
Disaster preparedness	3	2	1	0
Storage/environmental standards	3	2	1	0
Security/theft prevention	3	2	1	0
Privacy/access laws & regulations	3	2	1	0
Copyright	3	2	1	0
Exhibits	3	2	1	0
Public relations/outreach	3	2	1	0
Working with volunteers	3	2	1	0
Fund raising	3	2	1	0
Grant writing	3	2	1	0
Strategic planning	3	2	1	0
Supervisory skills	3	2	1	0
Advocacy to parent organization	3	2	1	0
Administrative/management issues	3	2	1	0
Photographs/films	3	2	1	0
Oral History	3	2	1	0
Other *(specify)*: _____	3	2	1	0
_____	3	2	1	0
_____	3	2	1	0

6. Which of the following continuing educational services would you be most likely to take advantage of?
(3 = most likely; 2 = might use; 1 = inconvenient or difficult to use; 0 = would not use) *(circle one for each topic)*

	Best ⇨			No use
Professional association conferences				
National organizations	3	2	1	0
Regional organizations	3	2	1	0
State organizations	3	2	1	0
Workshops (1-2 days)				
Offered anywhere in U.S.	3	2	1	0
Offered in my state	3	2	1	0
Offered in my city	3	2	1	0
Offered in-house	3	2	1	0
Institutes (1-2 weeks)	3	2	1	0
On-the-job training	3	2	1	0
Internships	3	2	1	0
Graduate education	3	2	1	0
Non-degree (adult ed.) college classes	3	2	1	0
Correspondence courses	3	2	1	0
Self-directed computer-based instruction (designed to run on your own machine)	3	2	1	0
Classes over the Internet	3	2	1	0
Teleconferences	3	2	1	0
Other *(specify)*: _____ _____	3	2	1	0

7. Rate the chief reasons that keep you from trying to acquire additional training or education. (3 = major concern; 2 = moderate concern; 1 = minor concern; 0 = not a concern) *(circle one for each topic)*

	Major concern ⇨			No concern
Too far to travel	3	2	1	0
Too expensive	3	2	1	0
Institution's training budget is limited	3	2	1	0
Institution won't pay expenses at all	3	2	1	0
Don't have sufficient staff coverage to take the time off	3	2	1	0
Not aware of opportunities that meet my needs	3	2	1	0
Institution doesn't consider training important	3	2	1	0
Other priorities take precedence	3	2	1	0
I don't need additional training	3	2	1	0
Other *(specify)*: _____ _____	3	2	1	0

8. What are the best vehicles for providing technical information and support? (3 = best method; 2 = acceptable methods; 1 = inconvenient or difficult to use; 0 = would not use) *(circle one for each topic)*

	Best ⇨			No use
Journals	3	2	1	0
Newsletters	3	2	1	0
Manuals, handbooks	3	2	1	0
Technical leaflets	3	2	1	0
Listservs *(specify)*: _____ _____	3	2	1	0
Direct mailings announcing new programs or services	3	2	1	0
Email notices announcing new programs or services	3	2	1	0
Internet websites	3	2	1	0
Archival consultant services	3	2	1	0
Mentoring relationships between repositories or individuals	3	2	1	0
Other *(specify)*: _____ _____	3	2	1	0

9. If you would like, please give us your name and address. *(optional)*

Name: _____

Title: _____

Address: _____

_____

_____

Telephone: _____

E-mail: _____

10. I would like to be contacted about future meetings to discuss these needs. *(circle one)*

1 Yes 2 No

For additional information about the NFACE Project, see the NFACE web site at **http://www.coshrc.org/nface**

Or write to Vicki Walch, NFACE Project Coordinator, at 65 N. Westminster St., Iowa City, IA 52245.

Please use the space below to give us any further comments about your needs relating to continuing education and information resources relating to the care of historical records. Feel free to attach an additional sheet if you would like.

_____

_____

_____

_____

Please return this completed form to:

Kathryn Otto, Montana Historical Society, P.O. Box 201201, Helena, MT 59620-1201
Phone: 406-444-4775 Fax: 406-444-2696 E-mail: archives@mcn.net

Deadline: October 15, 1999

MT

Chart Your Course: Museum/Archives Self-Assessment

The State Historical Records Advisory Board has put together a three-part project aimed at providing: 1) training in archival theory, methods, and practices for records custodians and volunteers who work with historical records in local historical societies, counties, or other local repositories; 2) a traveling archivist to assist local repositories with the implementation of historical records projects; and 3) regrant funds to aid local repositories in implementing and completing those projects. The SHRAB received a grant from the Montana Cultural Trust for assistance with part 1 and some of part 2. The SHRAB also has submitted a grant proposal to the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC) for a larger amount of money to regrant to the local repositories to fund the implementation phase of their projects. The national commission will meet in November and we should know the result of our regrant application by the end of November or early December.

Part 1 has already taken place. Eleven persons* received assistance to attend the annual meeting of the Northwest Archivists, Inc., in Missoula in May.

In preparation for parts 2 and 3, the SHRAB will be sponsoring a workshop called "Chart Your Course: Museum/Archives Assessment." It will focus on doing a self-assessment of your museum and/or archives. It will help you clarify your mission and priorities, and assess your operations and programs. This workshop will show you how to take a step-by-step approach to planning, from the preliminary stages through the development of goals and objectives, and the implementation of a written plan. By participating, you will gain an understanding of where your museum/archives is now, where it can and should be in the future, and how you can lead it there. By participating, you also will be preparing for the regrant program. An application to the regrant program will require a recent self-assessment study.

The workshop will be offered **October 14 in Helena** during the Montana History Conference.

**Robin Cadby-Sorensen (Headwaters Heritage Museum, Three Forks), Donna Dupea (Meagher County Historical Society, White Sulphur Springs), Judy Ellinghausen (Cascade County Historical Society, Great Falls), Magdalene Moccasin (Little Big Horn College, Crow Agency), Alvaretta Morin (Arlee Historical Society), Kathy Mosdal O'Brien (Western Heritage Center, Billings), Lee Rostad (Charles M. Bair Family Museum, Martinsdale), Marjorie Spragg (Diocese of Great Falls-Billings), Judy Strand (Butte-Silver Bow Public Archives, Butte), Karen Wegner (Moss Mansion, Billings), Carrie Wilke (Conrad Mansion, Kalispell).*

Educational Needs Survey and Focus Group

The National Forum on Archival Continuing Education (NFACE) is a project developed by the Council of State Historical Records Coordinators (COSHRC) in partnership with the American Association for State and Local History (AASLH). The project is being funded through a grant from the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC). NFACE is concerned with the continuing educational and informational needs of all individuals who care for historical records. *(That's you!)* In preparation for the National Forum—which will be held in Decatur, Georgia, in April 2000—the NFACE staff are undertaking an in-depth data gathering and evaluation process. All of the State Historical Records Advisory Boards (SHRABs) are being asked to gather information about their state's needs and priorities.

How can *you* participate? Two ways: 1) fill out and return the enclosed survey, and 2) attend a "focus group" meeting to discuss education and training to be held at the Montana SHRAB meeting on Thursday October 14 at 4:00 p.m. in the Haynes Auditorium of the Montana Historical Society in Helena

If you want to know more about the NFACE project, visit their website at: <http://www.coshrc.org/nface> or contact Kathryn Otto at the Montana Historical Society, 444-4775; archives@mcn.net; P.O. Box 201201, Helena, MT 59620-1201.

The Montana Archivist

Montana State Historical Records Advisory Board

c/o Montana Historical Society
P.O. Box 201201
Helena, MT 59620-1201

Published Quarterly
Kathryn Otto, Editor

News from Around Montana

Cascade County Historical Society

Book Published. Over the past year the Cascade County Historical Society has compiled a 250-page pictorial history of the county, which includes approximately 350 historic photographs and maps. The publication—*Cascade County Album: Our History in Images*—is now available.

Recent Acquisitions. The Archives recently acquired an Indian Education Collection. The collection consists of thirty-nine audio cassette oral histories produced for a program titled "The Critical thinking and Writing project," a non-traditional English course for Native American high school students. Recordings and related manuscripts cover various native American topics.

Meagher County Historical Society

Renovating. The Meagher County Historical Society has been renovating two rooms in the Castle Museum in White Sulphur Springs to house the county archives. They also have purchased new computer equipment to be used with the archives and also to update accessions for the museum artifacts. Dale Macafee (Society past president) and Donna Dupea (current president) are spearheading the project.

Montana Historical Society

Recently Processed Collections: Helena (Mont.) City Clerk Records, 1884-1917. This collection consists of records filed with the City Clerk of the City of Helena. The largest segment of the records consists of monthly reports of city officials and committees. In addition, there are correspondence, employee records, financial records, legal documents, specifications, and subject files. The strength of the collection is in documenting the development of the infrastructure of the city. 7 linear feet. Inventory available.

Yellowstone Historic Center

New Entity Created. The West Yellowstone Historical Society, the Town of West Yellowstone, and interested members of the community recently incorporated a new entity, the Yellowstone Historic Center. The Center will preserve and restore the Union Pacific buildings in West Yellowstone and will develop a museum. The archives will remain with the West Yellowstone Historical Society. Paul Shea is the archivist and historian for the West Yellowstone Historical Society and the executive director of the new Yellowstone Historic Center.